



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Forest Service



United States
Department of
the Interior



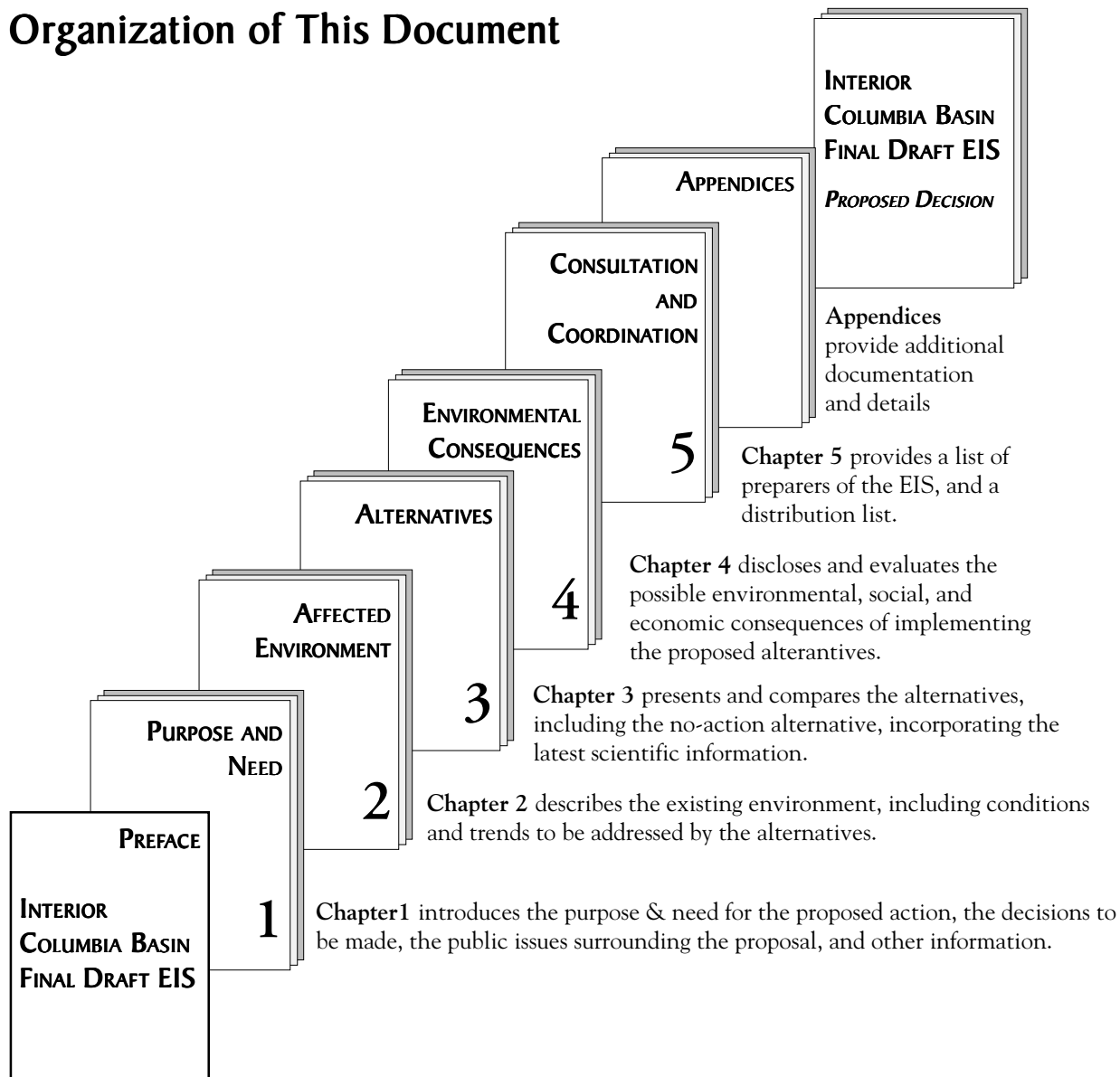
Bureau of Land
Management

Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project

Interior Columbia Basin Final Environmental Impact Statement

December 2000

Organization of This Document

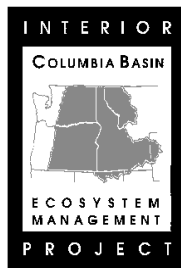


As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest uses of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interest of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

BLM/OR/WA/Pt-

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Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project

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Dear Reader:

This package contains two documents: the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP), and the proposed decision for the project. The Final EIS incorporates by reference the Supplemental Draft EIS, issued in March 2000. Therefore, it may be useful to use the Supplemental Draft EIS and the document in this package together, depending on the sections of interest.

The Final EIS responds to the comments we received on the Supplemental Draft EIS and reflects several clarifying changes, as explained in the preface. The proposed decision is the preferred alternative (Alternative S2) from the Supplemental Draft EIS, with refinements made in response to public comment and internal review.

Reaching a Final EIS and proposed decision for this project has involved close collaboration among the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, tribes, other federal agencies, and state and local governments. The public was instrumental in reviewing, commenting, and suggesting improvement for the documents. We greatly appreciate your participation over the past six years.

If you have participated in this ICBEMP planning process and have an interest that is, or may be, affected by approval of the proposed decision, you may protest such approval. The Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service will both use this protest process to provide the opportunity for administrative review of the proposed decision. The Forest Service appeal process, familiar to some readers, will not be used in reaching the Record of Decision. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.

To protest the approval of the proposed decision for the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project use the following procedure:

- ♦ Put the protest in writing and mail it to the following address:
Director, Bureau of Land Management, and Chief, Forest Service
ICBEMP Protests
PO Box 65480
Washington, DC 20035
- ♦ The protest shall be filed within 30 days of the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of receipt of the Final Environmental Impact Statement in the *Federal Register* (expected in mid December 2000). Public announcement of the exact date for protests will be made through local media and posted on the project website (www.icbemp.gov) when it is known.
- ♦ The protest shall contain:
 - ✓ The name, mailing address, telephone number, and interest of the person filing the protest;
 - ✓ A statement of the issue or issues being protested;
 - ✓ A statement of the part or parts of the proposed decision being protested;

- ✓ A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and
- ✓ A concise statement explaining why the responsible officials' proposed decision is believed to be wrong.

The BLM Director and the Forest Service Chief will promptly render a joint decision on the protest. The protest decision will be in writing and will set forth the reasons for the decision. The protest decision will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested.

The joint decision of the Director and Chief shall be the final decision on the protest of the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture.

Reviewers who do not protest the proposed decision on the project may not preserve their standing to litigate the final decision.

Once any protests are resolved, the responsible officials of the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management will sign the Record of Decision for the project.

For further information, please call Susan Giannettino, Project Manager, or Geoff Middaugh, Deputy Project Manager, at (208) 334-1770; or write to ICBEMP, 304 North 8th St., Room 250, Boise, Idaho 83702.

Susan Giannettino
Project Manager

Geoff Middaugh
Deputy Project Manager

Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project

**Interior Columbia
Basin Final
Environmental
Impact Statement**

Lead Agencies

*USDA Forest Service, Intermountain, Pacific Northwest, and Northern Regions
USDI Bureau of Land Management, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington*

Responsible Officials

*Dale Bosworth, Regional Forester, Forest Service Northern Region
Jack Blackwell, Regional Forester, Forest Service Intermountain Region
Harv Forsgren, Regional Forester, Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region
Martha Hahn, Idaho State Director, BLM
Mat Millenbach, Montana State Director, BLM
Elaine Zielinski, Oregon/Washington State Director, BLM*

For further information contact

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Abstract

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, and the U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), propose to develop and implement a coordinated, scientifically sound, broad-scale, ecosystem-based management strategy for lands they administer across parts of Idaho, Oregon, Montana, and Washington (approximately 63 million acres). The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) presents three management alternatives. *Alternative S1*, the no-action alternative, would continue current management on individual units of Forest Service- and BLM-administered lands under the 62 approved plans, as amended or modified by interim direction known as PACFISH, INFISH, and Eastside Screens, and by applicable Biological Opinions. *Alternatives S2 and S3* focus on restoring and maintaining ecosystems with consistent management direction across the project area and providing for the social and economic needs of people, while reducing short- and long-term risks to natural resources from human and natural disturbances. Under Alternative S2, an emphasis on conducting analyses (such as Subbasin Review and Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale) prior to conducting management activities is intended to minimize short-term risk from management activities in areas where short-term risks are of most concern, and to ensure actions occur in the most appropriate locations in the most appropriate sequence. Under Alternative S3, some short-term risk is acceptable, and less emphasis is placed on conducting Subbasin Review and Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale prior to conducting management activities. More areas are identified under Alternative S3 as high priority for restoration compared to Alternative S2.

The Regional Executive Steering Committee identified Alternative S2 as the preferred alternative, because they feel it responds best of all 10 alternatives (from the Draft EISs and the Supplemental Draft EIS) to the purpose and need statements and the five goals under the refined focus. The analysis of effects of the alternatives indicates that Alternative S2 would provide the strongest and best strategy for: restoring the health of the forests, rangelands, and aquatic-riparian-hydrologic ecosystems in the project area; recovering plant and animal (including fish) species; avoiding future species listings; providing a predictable level of goods and services from the lands administered by the BLM and the Forest Service; and best addressing tribal rights and interests. Mitigation of adverse effects has been incorporated into the preferred alternative. Monitoring, determined to be an important part of adaptive management, is outlined in the Implementation Framework.

The preferred alternative in the Supplemental Draft EIS, Alternative S2, has been modified in response to internal (Forest Service and BLM) review and public comments. It is presented, in its entirety, as the Interior Columbia Basin Final EIS: Proposed Decision. The changes reflected in the Final EIS are within the scope and the range of effects projected in the Draft and Supplemental Draft EISs.

The Final EIS incorporates the Supplemental Draft EIS by reference; therefore, it may be useful to use the two documents together, depending on which sections the reader is interested in.